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PROPOSED PROGRAMME AND BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM 1998/1999

Note by the Secretariat

1. Document A/AC.241/65, submitted to the INCD at its tenth session, contained preliminary proposals for the programme of work for 1998/1999 of the Conference of the Parties (COP) of the Convention to Combat Desertification (CCD), its subsidiary bodies and the Permanent Secretariat, and also for the related organization and structure of the Permanent Secretariat. The INCD adopted decision 10/4, whereby it requested the interim secretariat:

(a) to circulate, at least ninety days prior to the first session of the COP, necessary draft decisions related to the programme of work and budget of the COP, as well as detailed budget estimates for the biennium 1998/1999; and

(b) in so doing, to act on the basis of documents A/AC.241/65 and A/AC.241/46, and to take full account of comments made on this subject by delegations at the tenth and earlier sessions of the INCD, as well as any comments from Member States received by 15 February 1997.

2. Written comments made pursuant to decision 10/4 were received from Australia, Switzerland, the European Union, and the Group of 77 and China.

3. In preparing and submitting the first programme and budget for the Convention, account needs to be taken of General Assembly resolution 51/180, which affects the budget process, its format and its content. In that resolution, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General, subject to the decision of the COP at its first session, to consider:

(a) authorizing the secretariat established pursuant to General Assembly resolution 47/188 to act as a secretariat for the transition period following the first session of the COP until the Permanent Secretariat designated by the COP begins operating, which should not be later than 31 December 1998; and

(b) maintaining the arrangements within the current programme budget for the interim secretariat to support the Convention beyond the first session of the Conference of the Parties until the Permanent Secretariat begins operating, which should not be later than 31 December 1998, and maintaining the arrangements regarding the extrabudgetary funds.

4. In pursuance of this resolution, the Secretary-General is making provision, in his programme budget proposals to the General Assembly for the biennium 1998/1999, for the maintenance until 31 December 1998 of current arrangements for the interim secretariat and for the extrabudgetary funds authorized by General Assembly resolution 47/188. The text submitted by the Secretary-General to the General Assembly will be made available to the COP at its first session.

5. General Assembly resolution 51/180, and the ensuing action by the Secretary-General, has established the following budgetary framework for the CCD for the biennium 1998/1999:

(a) for 1998, the first year of the biennium, the current regime will continue, whereby the financial requirements for the Convention will be met, on the one hand, from the regular budget of the United Nations approved by the General Assembly and, on the other, from the two extrabudgetary funds established pursuant to resolution 47/188. Thus, the regular budget for 1998 will be considered and approved by the General Assembly; proposals for the use in 1998 of the two extrabudgetary funds also will be put to the General Assembly, and to the COP for its information.

(b) in contrast, requirements for 1999 will be considered in their totality by the COP. These requirements will be embodied, in part, in a core budget set at a fairly predictable level and covering essential long-term operations, and in part in proposals for the use of the Supplementary Fund and the Special Fund defined respectively in rules 9 and 10 of the proposed financial rules.

6. As a result, the programme and budget proposals for the CCD for the biennium 1998/1999 must be separately presented, year by year. For 1998 they are contained, in part, in the Secretary-General's proposals to the General Assembly; as regards extrabudgetary funds, information will also be furnished in a separate document for the attention of the COP. For 1999 however, Addendum 1 to this document presents to the COP all requirements in their totality, identifying separately those proposed to be funded by the core budget and those which it is suggested be met by the Supplementary Fund and the Special Fund.

7. The programme and budget proposals also must take into account the recommendation made by the INCD, in decision 10/2, to the effect that the COP accept the offer of the Secretary-General of the United Nations to provide the administrative and support arrangements for the Convention Secretariat, and that the COP request the Secretary-General to so provide pursuant to Article 23 of the Convention. INCD decision 10/2 also recommended to the COP that it decide that the Permanent Secretariat "not be fully integrated into the work programme and management structure of any particular department or programme of the United Nations."

8. There may be some additional requirements in 1998 neither covered by the United Nations regular budget nor included in extrabudgetary fund proposals, and therefore at this stage not placed before COP, in the following four cases:

(a) financing would be required in 1998 to operate any ad hoc panels established by the first session of COP pursuant to the recommendations of the CST. Related estimates would depend on the number of such panels, if any, the extent of their work and their membership;

(b) requirements in 1998 related to the work of the Global Mechanism could derive from decisions which COP may take, at its first session, on the identification of the organization to host the Mechanism and the modalities of its operation;

(c) depending on its timing, the relocation from Geneva to the country hosting the Permanent Secretariat may result already in 1998 in some expenditure in terms of removal and purchase of office furniture, equipment and supplies; of travel, removal and installation costs of Secretariat staff; of temporary assistance for double incumbency of some posts for short periods of time; and of rental of premises. It is possible, however, that part or most of these costs will be met from host government contributions, either general in nature or specifically earmarked for this purpose; and

(d) the General Assembly is to consider, at its fifty-second session, the inclusion of the 1998 session of the COP and its subsidiary bodies within the regular calendar of meetings of the United Nations. It is assumed, in this document, that requirements for 1998 for this purpose will be met by the United Nations regular budget. Should this not be the case, alternative financing will be required in an estimated amount of $1,000,000.

9. To the extent that firm financial requirements may emerge under any of the above headings, they shall be reported to COP for consideration and decision.

10. In taking action on the programme and budget for 1998 and 1999, the COP will need to take into account not only the submissions made in respect of each of the two years of the biennium, but also other action to be taken at its first session on related financial matters. An initial draft of a decision incorporating all such budget and financial matters will be circulated in document ICCD/COP(1)/2, which also contains the decisions recommended by the INCD to the COP.